

July 13, 1981

Dear Mr. President:

I attach a letter I wrote to Secretary Haig some time ago, sending also a copy to Mr. Allen. It outlines a concrete position for you at the Cancun conference in October that, I believe, reconciles the realities of domestic politics with your asserting world leadership at a critical moment. The argument can be summarized in two words every man and woman can understand: food and energy.

Cancun appears a unique opportunity to set North-South relations in the world on to a constructive path. I address you directly to underline a simple point I first learned in the 1950's as a consultant to the Eisenhower administration (including work on the 1955 Geneva Summit); the point was re-inforced by my work with Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. Despite all our vicissitudes of the past decade, the lesson is still clear: If the United States does not lead, there is no one to take its place, and problems don't get solved.

Although correcting our balance with the Russians is, obviously, fundamental to a viable foreign policy, it is in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America that our most dangerous crises actually arise as Moscow exploits the problems of those regions to our disadvantage. That has been the case, in fact, since the Korean War. If we do not find a way to help the developing regions solve their economic problems, we can expect much worse difficulties than we now confront in the Caribbean and Central America.

I believe a consensus can be built around an energy-food program which would pull North and South closer together and substantially reduce Soviet leverage on the South.

NSC review completed.

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In any case, I would simply say that some thirty-six years of experience in foreign affairs tells me that Cancun is the occasion for you quietly to assert global leadership on issues vital to the nation's security.

Sincerely yours,

W. W. Rostow

The Honorable Ronald Reagan
The President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20500

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*sent ^{cc} letter May 14, 1981, to Alexander Haig, less
attachment*

8/13/81 cc (with May 14, 1981, letter to Haig) sent to Richard V. Allen